

Department of Education gets funding boost for charter schools

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FORT COLLINS — U.S. Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, a strong supporter of school choice, helped present a \$4.875 million check to the Colorado Department of Education to fund charter school startup costs.

"This is what it's all about," Musgrave said as she waved Tuesday toward several children on the stage with her at Liberty Common Charter School.

Liberty Common Charter School enrolls approximately 60 students in each grade, kindergarten through ninth grade. The school focuses strongly on core learning principles and encourages strong parental participation in their children's education.

Musgrave said the money will help empower parents and students by giving them an alternative to other public schools.

Eugene Hickok, U.S. Department of Education deputy secretary, presented the check to Gary Sibigroth with the Colorado Department of Education.

"This state is really a national leader in education reform," Hickok said. "Charter schools are not going away. ... They get back to what education is supposed to be about."

Hickok and Musgrave passed the check to Sibigroth, assistant commissioner with the Colorado Department of Education. Sibigroth said the money will be used for charter school startup costs. After a charter school has been approved, the school can qualify for grants to provide sustainable funds for the first three years of operation.

But while Musgrave celebrated the small victory of funding for charter schools, she said she was "incredibly disappointed" with Monday's Colorado Supreme Court 4-3 decision blocking the implementation of vouchers.

"I don't think it's an issue of local control," she said. "It's not the end of (vouchers)."

School vouchers would allow parents to enroll their children in any school, including private or religious schools, using taxpayer dollars to pay for tuition.



Reporter-Herald/RJ SANGOSTI
Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave talks to Dr. Eugene Hickok, U.S. Department of Education Deputy Secretary, during a ceremony at Liberty Common Charter School in Fort Collins.